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CHRONICLES OF THE CASTLE

AND OF

THE EARLS OF LEICESTER

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Chronicles of the Castle

AND OF

THE EARLS OF LEICESTER,

FROM THE

FOUNDATION OF THE CASTLE

TO THE

MERGER OF THE EARLDOM

In the Crown of England.

BY W. NAPIER REEVE.

LEICESTER:
PRINTED BY CROSSLEY AND CLARKE,
1867.

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CHRONICLES OF THE CASTLE

AND OF

The Earls of Leicester.

A thousand years ago Leicester was a fair city, the seat of a Christian Bishop.

And it needed no other defence than the strong walls, which girt it around, and which the Roman conquerors had made for its safety and their defence.

Ann. Dom. 874.

But in the days of King Alfred, great trouble came over the land, for the Pagans had invaded it, and many great and strong cities were taken by them; and amongst these was the city of Leicester; for hither came the pagan Danes, the worshippers of Odin, and for nearly fifty years they held mastery therein, and they drove out the Bishop (and he was the last Bishop of Leicester), and destroyed the Christian temples.

Ann. Dom. 920

In this year King Alfred died, he had done great deeds and had conquered in many battles, but the city of Leicester remained in the power of the Heathen.

LADY ETHELFLÆDA.

But then arose his daughter ETHELFLÆDA, the renowned Lady of Mercia, and she fighting valiantly retook Leicester, and re-established therein the worship of the true God. And further to secure her conquest, she erected beyond the Roman walls a strong castle, wherein her soldiers might dwell, secure from sudden assault or treachery.

For she had been merciful to her prisoners, and had spared their lives, but she compelled them to renounce the worship of Odin, and be baptized into the true faith. And this they willingly agreed to, and were baptized in the river which runneth by the town. And the Lady of Mercia also built a fair Church, which she dedicated to our Lady, and because it was near to the Castle, so as to be within its protection, it was called, "The Church of Saint Mary de Castro."

And this was the beginning of the Castle of Leicester, and of the Church which standeth hard by, for they were both built in the same year.

The Saxon Earls.

And the Castle of Leicester became great in renown, and mighty kings and princes have had therein their abiding place; of such, were EDWARD THE ELDER, and ATHELSTAN, and EDMUND the Brother of Athelstan, and ETHELRED, and EDMUND IRONSIDE, and LEOFRIC, the Earl of Mercia and the Lady GODIVA (the ever renowned Lady Godiva), and their son ALGAR, and his son EDWIN.

And Edwin the grandson of Godiva was Earl of Leicester, and his brother MORCAR was Earl of Northumberland, and their sister was ALGITHA, the wife of Harold King of England.

And many a time did they meet together and make pastime in the hall of the Castle of Leicester, and often did the song and harp resound therein.

EDWIN THE SAXON.

But evil days were coming and trouble and sorrow; and Edwin, and Morcar were the last of their race.

Ann. Dom. 1068.

For when King Harold was slain at Hastings, Edwin had made submission to the Conqueror and had sworn obedience and fealty to him, because Edwin had hoped for the hand of Duke William's daughter.

And when this was disdainfully refused him, he rose against the Norman, and he called his brother Morcar, to aid, with his kinsmen and countrymen.

Then the Conqueror came in his might, and Edwin and Morcar fled before him; and he slew them both, and destroyed the Castle of Leicester, and the Church of St. Mary that Ethelflæda had built.

The Norman Earls.

But the town of Leicester, and all the rights thereof, did William the Norman grant to a follower of his own, Hugo de Grantmesnel.

And this Hugo repaired the Castle and Church of St. Mary, but a second destruction ere long came upon them; for when William the Norman was dead, Hugo became of the party of Duke Robert, and so brought upon himself and his town the vengeance of William, the Red King. Ann. Dom. 1080.

And the leader of the Red King's armies was Robert de Beaumont, and he seized on the Castle and Town of Leicester, and held them for a while, but not in his own right.

But when the Red King was slain by an arrow, Robert of Normandy again claimed the crown of England, but his brother Henry resisted him, and throughout the realm there was great division, for many took part with Duke Robert, and many with King Henry, but Robert de Beaumont, was chief of King Henry's men. 1100.

ROBERT DE BEAUMONT.

And in this year King Henry passed over the sea to fight with his brother, Duke Robert, and a sore battle was fought between them, and it was fought upon Saturday the Vigil 1106.

of St. Michael, being the self same day on which William the Bastard forty years before then, had set foot in England for conquest.

And this was the famous battle of *Tenchebray*, and Duke Robert and his men were beaten, and he became prisoner to his brother King Henry.

Ann. Dom. 1107.

And now Robert de Beaumont had for his reward the Town and Earldom of Leicester; and this Robert was a wise and trusty counsellor, and he had in his youth been a valiant knight, for it was he who with irresistible might had broken through the Saxon array at Hastings, which fought around King Harold.

And he came of a mighty race; and they were men, who in their own land had reared great and lofty towers, so that it was said, by the Chroniclers of their time, "You may know the might of the men, by the mightiness of their palaces."

And this Earl was the first Norman Earl of Leicester, and he rebuilt the Castle of Leicester, and he made it stronger than before, for he made a strong tower on a mount for its defence; and more beautiful than ever, for he made therein a stately hall, and this hall remains to this day.

And he rebuilt the Church hard by, the

Church of St. Mary de Castro, and he made it renowned amongst the churches of the land for splendour and beauty, and he enriched it with many and fair desmesnes.

And of him thus wrote one of the ancient writers "Robert de Beaumont was in worldly affairs the wisest of men, between England and Jerusalem, eminent for knowledge, plausible of speech, keen and crafty, profound in counsel, and of great wisdom."

And he was Earl of Leicester, and in right thereof claimed to be Seneschal of all England.

And all the rest of his days he dwelt in the Castle of Leicester, and he ruled therein like a mighty prince.

ROBERT BOSSU.

In this year Robert de Beaumont died, and his son Robert became Earl of Leicester. Ann. Dom. 1118.

And this second Earl was called Robert *Bossu*, for he was a hunchback, but he was wise and valiant.

And like all his race, he was a great builder, and because his father had rebuilt the Castle of Leicester and the Church of St. Mary de Castro,

so that nothing therein was left for him to do; he built the famous Abbey of Leicester, which was called St. Mary de Pratis, for it was built in the meadows beyond the river.

And because the Church of St. Mary of the Meadows should surpass that of St. Mary of the Castle, he took from the last all the possessions which the Earl his father had bestowed thereon; and gave them to his own new church, and thenceforth, while the Abbey Church remained, the Church of the Castle was called St. Mary the Less.

ROBERT BLANCHMAINS.

Ann. Dom. 1169.

And in this year Robert Bossu died, and he was buried in his own Church of St. Mary de Pratis, and his son, Robert with the white hand (Robert Blanchmains), ruled in his stead.

And during his days, the Town of Leicester was sorely tried, for the soldiers of King Henry the Second sacked and burnt it, to take vengeance on the Earl, who had conspired with

Queen Eleanor and her children against King Henry.

But the Castle of Leicester was so strong that it resisted all attacks thereon, and the knights and soldiers of the Earl defied the soldiers of the King.

Then the Earl, who was beyond the seas, returned in wrath to his own land, and with a great following made war on King Henry, but he was overcome in battle, and became prisoner to the King.

And King Henry was greatly rejoiced thereat, and he commanded that the Earl, and the Earl's wife, for she was a prisoner also, should be conveyed beyond the seas, and shut up in a fortress in Normandy.

But for all that, the Castle of Leicester was not surrendered, for the Earl had left therein as Constable thereof one ANQUETIL MALLARY, and he and his knights and squires and men at arms defied the King, and maintained the quarrel of the Earl; but the Earl and the Countess remained prisoners to the King.

Ann. Dom. 1174.

And in this year King Henry returned to England, and he brought with him, the Earl of Leicester, and kept him strictly in ward.

Also in this year did King Henry do penance

at Canterbury for the slaughter of the Archbishop, and thenceforth he triumphed over his enemies on every side.

Then the Constables of the castles of the Earl of Leicester, (for he had many fair and strong castles,) came to the King, to make intercession for their lord, but the King called for the holy relics, and in the presence of the Constables, swore thereon, that the Earl of Leicester should neither eat nor drink till the castles were surrendered to him. Then the Constables seeing the strait in which their lord was, yielded up the Castle of Leicester, and the Castles of Groby and Mountsorrel, which were the Castles of the Earl.

Ann. Dom. 1175. And in this year, the chief defences of the Castle of Leicester were demolished, that its lord might no longer be able to resist the King's power.

1189. But in this year King Henry the Second died, and his son Richard Cœur de Lion reigned in his stead; and because the Earl of Leicester had suffered so much for his sake, King Richard restored to the Earl all that King Henry had taken away.

And when King Richard was crowned, the Earl of Leicester stood by his side as Seneschal

of England, and carried before the King a golden sword.

And now the Earl purposed to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but he died, while yet in the way, and his son Robert succeeded, and he was the fourth Norman Earl of Leicester. Ann. Dom. 1190.

ROBERT FITZPARNEL.

And this Robert was inferior to none that went before him, either for wisdom or valour. He was called Robert *Fitzparnel* for that he was the son of Petronilla, and he was the companion and friend of Richard Cœur de Lion, and he went to the Holy Land with King Richard, and fought by his side against the Saracens.

And he was faithful and true to King Richard, and resisted his enemy King Philip of France; also he suffered imprisonment, and bore heavy losses in the cause of King Richard.

But when King Richard was dead, and John his brother ruled over England, the Earl of Leicester served King John faithfully; and for the Earl's sake, the King granted many privileges to the Burgesses of Leicester. 1199.

Also the Earl did grant many rights to the Burgesses, and they enrolled themselves in Companies and Guilds for the safety of their persons and protection of their goods.

Also, when the troubles began, for King John's was a troubled reign, the Barons of England assembled at the Castle of Leicester, to take counsel for the Commonwealth; and this was the first meeting of the Barons.

SIMON (Husband of Amicia).

Ann. Dom. 1204. In this year died the fourth Earl of Leicester, Robert Fitzparnel, and he left no son surviving. But Amicia his sister, was the wife of Simon de Montfort, and in her right Simon became Earl of Leicester.

1209. But when Pope Innocent III. had placed the land under his interdict, Simon departed from England, and he became the leader of the army against the Albigenses.

1212. And in this year when Lewis the Dauphin invaded England, Simon returned with him, and took part against King John.

1218. And in this year, Simon died, for he was slain before the town of Toulouse, he was the

fifth Earl of Leicester, and his son Simon became Earl in his stead.

SIMON DE MONTFORT.

And this second Simon is the great Earl, Simon de Montfort, and he returned to the Castle at Leicester, and dwelt there.

And when King Henry III. married his Queen Eleanor, Simon was at the marriage feast, and claimed to be High Steward of England, because of his Earldom of Leicester. Ann. Dom. 1236.

And the King loved Simon greatly; and he gave him his own sister in marriage, so that the Earl of Leicester was brother to the King of England, and to the Emperor of Germany, and to the King of Scotland, and his power and his renown increased. 1238.

But the jealousy of King Henry was stirred up against the Earl, and he was sore displeased, and Simon and his Countess crossed over the seas to avoid the anger of King Henry. 1239.

But in the following year Simon returned to England, and when the Barons rose against the King, Simon de Montfort was their chief. 1240.

And in this year, was that famous Parliament 1258.

at Westminster, whither the Barons came, each in complete armour, and the leader of them all was Simon the Earl.

And in this same year was held at Oxford that other Parliament, which was thereafter called the Mad Parliament.

And when the Barons appeared there, armed and with their array, Simon was the chief of them all.

Also when the supreme Council of State was there formed to govern the realm, Simon was the chief. And so the Earl of Leicester became the greatest in the land, and he made many wise ordinances, and good laws.

Ann. Dom. 1264.

And this was a memorable year, for in the spring time thereof King Henry came to Leicester, with his son, Prince Edward; although no King of England had before then entered the Castle, that Robert de Beaumont had built, for the saying was, "Evil will follow the King of England, who feasts in the Castle of Leicester."

And this saying was fulfilled that selfsame year, for presently was fought the famous battle of Lewes, and the King and the Prince became prisoners to the Earl of Leicester.

But while King Henry was prisoner to his kinsman, the Earl of Leicester, writs were

issued in the King's name, to the sheriffs throughout the kingdom, commanding them to return two Knights for every Shire, and two Burgesses for every Borough within the realm.

And this was the first Parliament of England.

And he who caused it to be assembled was Simon de Montfort, the great Earl of Leicester.

And he was the chiefest man in the land, and he dwelt in his Castle of Leicester, and he ruled the people as a King.

Ann. Dom. 1265.

But in this year, he was slain, he and his son; for the Barons of England were jealous of his greatness, and joined themselves to Prince Edward, and a great slaughter was made, and Simon's head was cut off as the head of a traitor, and his land forfeited, as for treason. And he was the last Norman Earl of Leicester.

But his memory lasted long, for the people of the land had trusted greatly in him, and the clergy had praised him, as the protector of the oppressed, the father of the poor, the saviour of his country, and the avenger of the Church.

And the clergy called him "*Sir Simon the Righteous*;" but the common people called him "*Sir Simon the King.*"

The Lancastrian Earls.

Ann. Dom. 1265. And now the Earldom of Leicester passed away to another race, for King Henry granted the Earldom and the Honour of Leicester, and the Stewardship of England, to his son Edmund, who was also Earl of Lancaster.

1267. But the sons of Simon, resisted the King, and the Barons rose in arms again, even they, who had caused the destruction of the Earl; and so in this year, a Parliament was called, and the good laws that Simon had made were re-enacted, and the land was at peace.

1270. Then the sons of Simon with their mother, the sister of King Henry, departed from England, and dwelt in foreign lands, and there they slew Henry, the son of the King of the Romans, who had been the enemy of their father.

1270. But the Earldom of Leicester passed away from them, and the King's brother Edmund dwelt in their Castle, and ruled over their lands.

EDMUND CROUCHBACK.

And he was called Edmund Crouchback, even as the Norman Earl had been called Robert *Bossu.* And in this year he would have held a tournament at the Castle, but the King forbade it, for he feared the gathering of the Barons at Leicester.

And in this year King Henry died. He was the third of his name, and had reigned in England fifty-six years; and Edward his son reigned in his stead. Ann. Dom. 1272.

And Edward was exceeding wroth with the sons of Simon, and would have slain them, but they fled from him.

And in this year King Edward returned to England, for he had been in the Holy Land; and he ordained that the Judges should go through the realm, and do justice in every chief town, and so they came to Leicester. 1274.

Then did the King's brother, Edmund Earl of Leicester, command that the great hall of his Castle should be the place of judgment, and the Judges sat there, and thenceforth, even to this day, do the Queen's justices sit to administer the laws in the hall of the Castle of Leicester.

Ann. Dom. 1277. In this year Elinor de Montfort, the daughter of the Great Earl, was given in marriage to Lewellyn the Prince of North Wales, for Lewellyn loved the Earl, and was steadfast in his love, even when Simon's family was ruined and his friends scattered.

1282. But the evil fortune of Simon followed his race, for in this year Lewellyn was slain by King Edward, and his head was cut off, even as Simon de Montfort's had been, and was crowned with a willow wreath in mockery.

And thenceforth the memory of the children of Simon passed away from amongst men.

THOMAS THE EARL.

1299. In this year Edmund, Earl of Lancaster, and Earl of Leicester, died, and Thomas his son was the second Lancastrian Earl of Leicester.

1300. In this year came King Edward to Leicester, and he was well entertained there; and so the old saying that no King of England should come to the Castle of Leicester, was for a while held as naught.

1305. And Thomas the Earl was a great Lord, and

his uncle King Edward loved him, and for his sake, the King granted to the Burgesses a fair to be held from the 10th to the 24th of June.

And King Edward the First died in this year, and his son Edward, the Second, reigned in his stead, and his reign was full of trouble. Ann. Dom. 1307.

For the King was governed by favourites and men of low degree, and so the Barons of the Realm rose against him, as they had risen against his grandfather King Henry.

And the Earl of Lancaster, who is also Earl of Leicester, was the leader of the Barons, even as Simon de Montfort had been in his time.

And the Barons, with the Earl of Lancaster, and the Earl of Pembroke, and the Earl of Warwick, seized on Piers Gaveston, the King's favourite, and put him to death. 1311.

And King Edward was very wroth, and there was war between the King and his kinsman.

But in this year peace was made, and reconciliation, for the Pope would have it so, and he made mediation between the King and the Earl. 1318.

And the King, and the Queen Isabella, and the Legate, came to the Castle of Leicester, and there abode for a while. And they were the guests of the Earl, who received them joyfully, and made great feasts there; but evil was

in store for the King who feasted at the Castle of Leicester.

And the evil came even of this very visit to Leicester, for at this time there was in the Earl's household one *Hugh Despenser*, and he was a youth of goodly presence, and wise and brave. And at the King's request, Hugh Despenser, left the service of the Earl, and thenceforth became the King's own man. And the King loved him greatly, even beyond the love he had borne aforetime to Piers Gaveston.

And the daughter of the Earl of Gloucester was given in marriage to Hugh Despenser, and he thereby became possessed of many lands. And amongst these were lands in the county of Glamorgan, in the Welsh Marches.

But the Welshmen hated Despenser, and rose against him, and burnt his castles, and destroyed his goods, for they remembered their Prince Lewellyn, and his wife Elinor, the daughter of Simon de Montfort.

Ann. Dom. 1321. And in this year the Earl of Leicester joined himself to the Welshmen, for he was jealous of Hugh Despenser, who had been once his own man, but who now equalled himself with the great lords of the land.

And the Earl of Leicester, who is also Earl of

Lancaster, took with him a great host, even thirty-four Barons, and Knights, and men at arms without number.

And King Edward fled before him, and the Earl marched to the south, and entered into the City of London.

Then a Parliament was called, and the Barons assembled as of old with arms in their hands, and they banished Despenser and his father from the kingdom, and the King confirmed the sentence. But in the autumn of the same year the Despensers returned to England, and the King's hands were strengthened against the Earl and the Barons.

And the King seized twelve Knights of the party of the Earl of Leicester, and hanged them in one day.

Then the Earl of Leicester went to the North Country, and essayed to join himself to the Scots, who were warring against the English, and they promised to come to his help with a great army.

But the English hated the Scots and forsook the Earl, because he had thus joined himself to the enemies of England.

Ann. Dom. 1322.

And in this year a sore battle was fought between the Earl and the King's men, and the Earl was beaten and fled to a sanctuary.

And he kneeled before the Holy Cross and said, "Good Lord, I render myself to Thee, and put me into thy mercy." And he became prisoner to the King.

And King Edward was exceeding wroth with the Earl, and he caused him to be brought to judgment in one of his own castles, but not in the Castle of Leicester. For the Castle of Pontefract was made the place of judgment for the trial of the Earl, and there were six Earls and Barons assembled, and the King himself sat in the court.

And they adjudged the Earl of Leicester to die by the gibbet, because he had so caused Piers Gaveston to die, but forasmuch as he was of the blood Royal, his head was severed from his body.

Ann. Dom. 1322. March 23.

And he was led out to execution, mounted on a mean horse without saddle or bridle, and the base folk reviled him, and cast mud and dirt at him. And so died Thomas, the second Lancastrian Earl of Leicester, a bloody death, even as Simon de Montfort had died before him.

And as great slaughter had been made of the friends of Simon, so in like manner great slaughter was now made of the friends of Thomas.

For the King caused eight and twenty Knights to be hanged, drawn, and quartered, and their lands and possessions to be taken away. And the sentence on Hugh Despenser was reversed, and his father was made Earl of Winchester, and the King loved Hugh more than ever.

But evil days were to come upon him and the King also, and the saying that evil awaits the King who feasted at the Castle of Leicester, was yet to be fulfilled.

And for all that the base folk had done to the Earl by the command of the King, his memory was held in reverence, for he was a holy man and a just, even as the Great Earl Simon had been; and many miracles were done on the place where the Earl Thomas was put to death.

HENRY THE EARL.

And now the Earl of Leicester was Henry the brother of Thomas, and he was also Earl of Lancaster. And at his first coming to the Earldom he was in low estate, for the King had seized on his possessions, and many of his friends and adherents had fled the realm. For Hugh

Ann. Dom. 1323.

Despenser was now mightier than the mightiest of the Barons, and the whole land was under his feet.

But the Lancastrian party (for so those who sided with the Earl were called) fled to France, and there took counsel together how they might deliver the land.

And Queen Isabella was the wife of King Edward, and she was sister to Charles the French King. And Charles (who was also called Charles le Bel) took part with the Lancastrians, and seized on some castles of King Edward.

Ann. Dom. 1325.

Then Queen Isabella went to France to make reconciliation, as it was said, between her husband and her brother.

But in her heart the Queen hated her husband, and especially the King's favourites, and while Thomas Earl of Leicester lived she had taken part with him, and relied on him for protection.

But now that he was dead the Queen went over the sea to her brother, the French King, and she joined herself to the Lancastrian party.

And Edward the King's son, who was but a youth, went with her, and a great party was formed against the King and the King's favourites; and presently the Queen Isabella and

her son, and the Barons who had fled, when the Earl of Leicester was put to death, returned to England.

And the young Prince was hailed as the deliverer of the land, and King Edward and Hugh Despenser fled before him,

Then was the King's son Edward proclaimed King of England, for his father had departed from the realm. Ann. Dom. 1327.

And because the King was of tender years, the Earl of Lancaster was chosen to be his guardian, and he was Protector of the King's person and chief in the land.

And now sore vengeance was taken on those who had put the last Earl of Leicester to death.

For the people rose up in their fury, and they slew the Bishop of Exeter, and destroyed many, and they set all the prisoners free; and the elder Despenser, who had been created Earl of Winchester, they took and hanged on a gibbet, for that had been the doom adjudged to the Earl of Leicester.

And shortly afterwards his son, Hugh Despenser, was taken prisoner, and he was sentenced to be hanged, drawn, and quartered; and so he died. Then the King himself (that is King Edward the Second) became prisoner to

Henry the Earl of Leicester, even as King Henry in the old time had been prisoner to Simon de Montfort.

And now the attainder of Thomas Earl of Lancaster was reversed, and all his honours and dignities and possessions were restored to his brother, and so the Earl of Leicester was again the chiefest man in the realm.

Ann. Dom. 1327. And in this year a Parliament was called, and King Edward was summoned to hear the word of the Earl of Leicester, and the Barons of the realm; and all fealty and allegiance were withdrawn from him, and the staff of office was broken before him, and he ceased to reign in the land.

And early in the year the young King was crowned, Edward the Third, King of England, and his mother Isabella ruled in his name.

And to the Earl of Leicester was committed the keeping of the late king's person.

But for all that King Edward the Second had done to his brother, the Earl of Leicester had compassion on the King's misery, and spoke kindly to him, and courteously entreated him.

Then Queen Isabella was angry with the Earl of Leicester, and she removed the old King

from his keeping, and gave him into the hands of Sir John Maltravers, who had suffered much from the King and his favourites.

And the King was carried from place to place, so that none might know where he was, and he was taken to Berkeley Castle.

And there as tradition saith, he was cruelly put to death, and so was accomplished the saying, "Evil awaits the King of England who feasts at the Castle of Leicester."

In this year King Edward was married to Queen Philippa, and came to Leicester. Ann. Dom. 1328.

But the Kingdom was yet in the hands of Isabella the Queen Mother, and she ruled over the land in her son's name.

Then the Barons rose against the Queen, for that she was herself ruled by her paramour Mortimer.

And the Earl of Leicester as the Guardian of the King's person, withstood the power of Mortimer, but in vain, for the young King remained with his mother.

Then the Earl of Leicester joined himself to the King's uncles the Earl of Kent, and the Earl of Norfolk; but the power of the Queen prevailed against them.

And in this year the King's uncle, the Earl 1330.

of Kent, became prisoner to the Queen, and he was put to death.

And the Earl of Leicester became prisoner also, and to save his life he paid a heavy ransom to Mortimer and the Queen.

And the land was ruled by Mortimer and the Queen, even as it had been in the days of Hugh Despenser.

But in the same year, Mortimer was seized by King Edward at the Castle of Nottingham, and he was hanged on a gallows, for the death of the King's uncle, the Earl of Kent.

Then King Edward ruled royally; and the Earl of Lancaster was taken from prison, and became one of the chief in the realm.

Ann. Dom. 1331. And the Earl came to his Castle of Leicester, and in token of his deliverance from the hand of his enemies, he founded a hospital there.

And he called it TRINITY HOSPITAL; and it was for the comfort of aged men and women, and it was built within the precincts of the Castle, and there it remains to this day.

1333. And in this year came King Edward to Leicester, and he abode there many days, for the Earl was his kinsman and friend.

1335. And in this year came Queen Philippa to Leicester, but she would not dwell within the

Castle because of the saying; but she abode in the Abbey of St. Mary, and there the townsmen of Leicester came to her, and presented her with gifts.

And the Earl of Lancaster dwelt thenceforth peacefully at his Castle of Leicester all the days of his life.

And he was a mighty prince, and had great possessions.

For he held all the castles and manors and lands, that Simon de Montfort had held.

And he was Captain General of the King's army in Scotland.

And when King Edward made war with the French King, the Earl of Leicester was with him in all his wars.

And it was even from his hand that King Edward himself received knighthood.

Ann. Dom. 1344.

And in this year there was a grand tournament at the Castle of Leicester, for that the daughter of the Earl's son Henry, was given in marriage to Duke William of Bavaria, son of the Emperor of Germany.

But the Earl himself was then well stricken in years, and he had become blind, and feeble, so the feast was held at the Castle by the Earl's son.

Ann. Dom. 1345.

And in this year the Earl died in his own Castle of Leicester, and he was buried in the Collegiate Church of the Newarke.

And King Edward came to his burying, and with him his Queen Philippa, and also many Earls and Barons.

For the Earl had lived as a great prince, and was buried with the burying of the King's kinsman, and Henry his son who dwelt in the Castle of Leicester ruled in his stead.

HENRY THE DUKE.

And of all the Earls of Leicester none was braver than this Earl, and while his father lived, he was called Earl of Derby.

And when King Edward made war on the King of France, the Earl led a great army into the province of Guienne to defend the same.

1346. And the Earl subdued many provinces and took many towns.

Then the French King sent against him, the Duke of Normandy, and the Duke of Burgundy, with a very great army, and the Earl withdrew into his stronghold.

Then King Edward was told of the Earl's

need, and he departed from England with a mighty army to make war against the French king.

And in this same year was fought the famous battle of CRECY, and the army of the French King was utterly destroyed. Ann. Dom. 1346. August 23.

Then the Duke of Normandy left Guienne, and the Earl of Leicester became master there.

And he took many towns as *Mirabeau*, *Lusignan*, *Taillebourg*, *Poictiers*, and came even to the river Loire, and all France was filled with alarm.

And in this year was the famous siege of CALAIS, and the Earl departed from Guienne, to join King Edward, who was encamped before the town. 1347.

And Sir Walter Manny, who was also of great renown, and had helped the Earl in his wars, came also and joined the King.

And when the town fell into the King's hands, which it did by reason of the sore famine therein, the King commanded that six of the townsmen should be hanged.

But Queen Philippa, and the Earl of Leicester, and Sir Walter Manny, made earnest entreaty, and the lives of these men were spared.

Then the King returned to England, and the 1348.

Earl of Leicester went with him, and because of his renown the King created him Duke of Lancaster, and he was the first Earl of Leicester, who was also Duke of Lancaster.

And in this year a great battle was fought in the narrow seas within sight of the town of Winchelsea, and King Edward and the Prince of Wales were in the battle, and many stood on the sea shore watching the fight. But the King's ship was in danger of sinking, and the King and the Prince would have perished in the sea; then came the Duke of Lancaster to their help, and the King and the Prince were saved, and there was a great victory.

But this was a sore year for England, notwithstanding these mighty victories, and for Leicester notwithstanding the renown of her Earl, for a great sickness went through the land, and many men and cattle died.

And some say that half the people of the land died, so that there were not left alive enough to till the ground.

And in Leicester the plague was very sore, also there was a sore murrain amongst beasts.

Ann. Dom. 1349.

But in this year, the plague was stayed, and King Edward came to Leicester, and lodged at the Castle.

And there was a Parliament held in Leicester, in this year.

And in this year the Order of the *Garter* was founded by King Edward, and the Duke of Lancaster, and the chief of the nobility were created Knights of the Garter.

Also the Duke of Lancaster was made Admiral of the King's Fleet, and he was called "*The Prince's right hand,*" for he was with the Black Prince continually.

And he was surnamed "Grismond" from the place of his birth, and amongst all the mighty men of the land, none was greater than the Earl of Leicester.

Also the Castle of Leicester was his dwelling place, and he loved the people of the town.

For in this year, the Duke obtained from the King, that there should be a market and fair, and the fair was to be free of tolls. Ann. Dom. 1351.

Also in this year the Duke released the people of Leicester from the payment of a tax called the "*Huckster Molt,*" which had been ordained in the time of Edmund the Earl. And the Duke did these things for that the town of Leicester had suffered in the sickness, also "for the salvation of his soul, and the souls of his ancestors." 1353.

Ann. Dom. 1354. And in this year the Duke greatly enriched the Collegiate Church in the Newarke, and added to the Hospital that his father had built there.

1355. In this year the Duke of Lancaster went with an army into Normandy to take part with the King of Navarre, whom the French King had put in prison.

1356. And the Prince of Wales with an army essayed to join the Duke in Normandy, but he could not. For the French King had broken down all the bridges over the river Loire, and the Prince retreated before him.

1356. September 19. And when the French King pursued him, there was fought the great battle of POICTIERS, and King John of France became prisoner to the Prince of Wales.

And so the Duke of Lancaster was relieved from his straits by reason of the battle of *Poictiers*, as he had been aforetime by the battle of *Crecy;* but he himself was in neither of these battles.

For he was warring at the head of an army, which he had at his own command.

1357. 1358. 1359. And during these years there was sore war in France, and great misery and desolation; and the King of Navarre, escaped from prison, and the Duke of Lancaster fought for him.

And in this year the Lady Blanche, youngest daughter of the Duke of Lancaster, was married to the King's son John, called John of Gaunt. Ann. Dom. 1359.

But in this year peace was made, for it was urged by the Duke, and the King of England consented thereto. 1360.

And King John of France was restored to liberty for a great ransom.

Then the Duke returned to his Castle of Leicester, and the men of Leicester received him gladly.

For they knew that he would ask something of the King in their behalf, for he loved the men of Leicester.

And so the Duke obtained for the town a grant of a fair at Michaelmas, and the grant was made to the King's beloved and faithful kinsman Henry Duke of Lancaster, and Earl of Leicester. 1360. July 2.

And whosoever came to the town during the fair, was to be free of toll, whether he be a dweller in the town or a stranger.

And the renowned knight, Sir Walter Manny, the Duke's friend, was witness to the grant.

But in this year the Duke died. And he died at his Castle of Leicester, and was buried in the Collegiate Church in the Newarke. 1361.

And there was no son born to the Duke, and none to be Duke of Lancaster after him.

WILLIAM OF BAVARIA.

But his daughter, the Lady Maud, was the wife of William Duke of Bavaria, and he was the eldest son of Lewis the Fourth, Emperor of Germany.

Ann. Dom. [1344.] And it was the same Maud, at whose marriage the great tournament was held at Leicester, in Earl Henry's days.

And because of his wife the Lady Maud, the Duke claimed to be Earl of Leicester, and Steward of England.

But Blanche, the Duke's youngest daughter, was the wife of the King's son, John of Gaunt. And for her sake, John of Gaunt was now created Duke of Lancaster.

But while the Lady Maud lived, the Earldom of Leicester was claimed by her, and by her husband, in her behalf.

JOHN OF GAUNT.

And when the Lady Maud died, (for she died childless,) the Duke of Lancaster, in right of his wife, the Lady Blanche, claimed to be Earl of Leicester, and Steward of England, and his claim was allowed.

But before this he had done many great and marvellous deeds, and had gotten great honour and renown.

For in this year he went with his brother, the Prince of Wales, to the help of Don Pedro, King of Castile. Ann. Dom. 1367.

And when the King of France came with an army against the King of Castile, the two brothers, the Prince of Wales, and the Duke of Lancaster, fought with him and defeated him with great slaughter.

And so Peter was restored to the Kingdom.

But this year Peter was slain by his brother Henry. 1368.

In this year the Lady Blanche wife of John of Gaunt died. 1369.

Also in this year the Prince of Wales was sick nigh unto death, and King Edward was old

and feeble. Then the French King made war upon England, and summoned the Prince to appear before him at Paris.

And the Prince replied that he would come, and bring sixty thousand men with him.

Ann. Dom. 1370. Then there was a fierce war, and the Duke of Lancaster commanded for the King of England in the north, and the Prince of Wales in the south.

1372. In this year the Duke married for his second wife, Constance, the eldest daughter of Pedro, the late King of Castile, and the Duke claimed in her right to be King of Castile and Leon.

And when the Prince of Wales by reason of his sore sickness returned to England, the Duke of Lancaster commanded in the south of France.

And the King of France could not stand before him, but went into his strongholds, and the Duke marched over the land, but the strong cities remained untaken.

1374. In this year a truce was made between England and France, and the Duke of Lancaster returned to England.

And because of the sickness of the Prince of Wales, the Duke took on him the government, for King Edward was now very old and feeble.

1376. And in this year the Black Prince died, and

the Duke of Lancaster became the chief man in the realm

In this year died William Duke of Bavaria, who was the husband of the Lady Maud, and who had claimed in her right to be Earl of Leicester. Ann. Dom. 1377.

And now John of Gaunt Duke of Lancaster, claimed to be Earl of Leicester, in right of his late wife the Lady Blanche.

And his claim was allowed, for none in those days could resist the Duke of Lancaster.

And the Castle of Leicester, and all the lands and desmesnes appertaining thereto became his.

And in the same year King Edward the Third died, and his grandson Richard reigned in his stead. 1377. June 21.

And at the coronation of King Richard, the Duke of Lancaster claimed to be Seneschal of England, because of his Earldom of Leicester; also, he claimed to carry the sword of state, because he was Earl of Lancaster; also to carve for the King at his coronation day, because he was Earl of Lincoln.

And these claims were allowed, and the day before the King was crowned, the Duke held his Court in the White Hall of the King's palace.

And because the King was but of tender

years, the Duke was appointed to be protector of the King's person, even as Henry the Earl was appointed guardian of King Edward the Third.

And now of all the Earls of Leicester, John of Gaunt was the greatest, for he was Regent of the kingdom of England, and ruled like a mighty Prince.

And because of his wife Constance he claimed to be King of Castile and Leon.

And he took delight in his Castle of Leicester, for he loved the town of Leicester, and the dwellers therein.

Ann. Dom. 1378. And in this year the Duke led an army into Brittany, to fight with the French King, also he was Admiral of the fleet, and he laid siege to the town of St. Malo, but he could not take it.

1380. And there was great distress in the land, for the King had need of money, and a tax was laid by which, each man and woman throughout the land should pay three groats.

Then there was a great rising of the people, and they called their leaders by the names of *Wat Tyler*, and *Jack Straw*.

And the mutinous people were in number more than one hundred thousand men; and they

burnt the Duke of Lancaster's palace in London, and destroyed many.

And the rebellious people hated the Duke, and because they said that he would be King of England, they caused men to take an oath, that they would have no king, called "John."

Also they threatened to march upon the town of Leicester, and destroy the Duke's castle there, as they had burnt his palace in London.

But the men of Leicester loved the Duke, and put themselves in array, and day and night they kept watch and ward, that no harm should come to the Castle of Leicester, or the Duke's possessions there.

But when Wat Tyler was slain the rebellious people dispersed.

And this year King Richard was married, and the Duke of Lancaster, besought of him aid, that he might go to Spain and fight for his kingdom of Castile. But when he asked for money the Parliament refused him. Ann. Dom. 1382.

But King Richard was governed by favourites, and men of low degree, even as King Edward the Second had been. 1384.

And as in those days, the Earl of Leicester was accused of plotting against the King, so was

John of Gaunt accused of plotting against King Richard.

Then the Duke withdrew himself into Scotland and refused to come to the court of his nephew.

And when the King earnestly besought him to return, he would not until King Richard had made public disavowal of the accusation. Also the King granted to the Duke that he should have continually with him, armed men for his safety.

But when the Parliament had met, one John Latimer, a friar, gave into the King's hands a parchment wherein was set forth how that a conspiracy was formed to place the crown of England on the head of the Duke of Lancaster.

And the King gave the writing into the hands of the Duke, who was very wroth, and was ready to do battle with any knight, who should accuse him; and meanwhile he required that the friar should be put in prison.

And so the friar was given into the keeping of John Holland, the King's half brother.

But the next day the friar was found dead, and some said that he had been strangled by the King's brother, but others that he had laid hands on himself.

And there was a great outcry, and the King would have seized on the Duke, but he withdrew himself to his own Castle of Pontefract.

Then the King's mother, who was aforetime called the "Fair Maid of Kent," sought to reconcile the King and the Duke, and peace was made between them.

Also she procured that no question should be made of the death of the Friar John, at the hands of her son John Holland.

So there was friendship between the King and the Duke, and King Richard and his Queen came to the Castle of Leicester, and great feasts were made there. Ann. Dom. 1385.

But wise men doubted how the end would be, for they remembered the coming thither of King Edward the Second, and his Queen, and what had thence befallen.

And the King made the Duke's son Henry (called Henry of Bolingbroke) Earl of Derby, even as his grandfather the first Duke of Lancaster had been while his own father was living.

And now the Duke of Lancaster would go into Spain to fight for his kingdom of Castile.

And King Richard was glad at his going, and the Parliament granted money in aid of the

Duke. Also the King gave the Duke a crown of gold, and commanded that he should be called King of Spain, so the Duke sailed from England with an army of ten thousand men.

And he landed at Corunna, and joined himself to the King of Portugal, who had married the Duke's eldest daughter.

And the Duke's armies prevailed everywhere, and the Spaniards fled before him.

But in the next year, his army was sorely tried by pestilence and famine.

Then the Duke made peace with the King of Castile, and the Duke's daughter Catherine was married to the King's eldest son, Prince of Asturias.

And so the Duke renounced his own claim to the kingdom of Castile, and departed to his own country.

But the posterity of the Lady Catherine, his daughter, reigned in Spain for many generations.

Also the King of Castile gave him two hundred thousand crowns, and he covenanted to pay yearly to the Duke and his Duchess during their lives ten thousand marks.

Ann. Dom. 1390.

And the Duke of Lancaster was away from England three years and King Richard desired his return greatly.

And the King created him Duke of Acquitaine, and he received at the King's hands the rod of state, and cap of maintenance, and he was to be sovereign Duke of Acquitaine in Gascony.

But the Gascon people, would not have it so, for they said that the Dukedom of Acquitaine was appurtenant to the crown of England only.

Therefore the King revoked the grant.

But the King came again to the Castle of Leicester, and with him came the Queen, and the Archbishop of York; also thither came the King's uncles the Dukes of York and Gloucester, and many other barons and noble men.

And they remained in Leicester many days, and in the day time they hunted the deer in the forest of Leicester, and at night they feasted in the great hall, that Robert de Beaumont had built.

And this was the time of the greatest splendour in the Castle, for in all the old time before there had been no such days as these; no not even in the time of the first Duke, whom men now called the "*Good* Duke of Lancaster."

But when King Richard had departed from Leicester, men bethought themselves of the old sayings, and they looked that evil should come upon the King who feasted in the Castle of Leicester.

Ann. Dom. 1391. And this year the Duke went to France to make peace between the Kings of France and England.

1393. And this year died the Lady Constance, the wife of the Duke. She was the daughter of Peter the Cruel, King of Castile, and her daughter was married to the Prince of Asturias.

But the Lady Constance died at the Castle of Leicester, while her lord was away.

And the next day died Mary de Bohun, the wife of Henry of Bolingbroke, and mother of him who was afterwards King Henry the Fifth.

And these noble ladies died together while their husbands were in foreign lands, and they were buried in the Collegiate Church of the Newarke.

And thenceforth there was no more feasting in the Castle of Leicester during the life of John of Gaunt.

1394. And now a truce was made between England, France, and Scotland, and the truce was to endure for four years, and so the Duke of Lancaster returned to his Castle of Leicester.

And Queen Anne, the wife of King Richard, died this year, and in the following year the King was solemnly espoused to Isabella the daughter of the French King.

And Henry of Bolingbroke, who was Earl of Derby, was now created Duke of Hereford.

And this year John of Gaunt married Catherine Swinford, who had been the attendant on the Lady Blanche, the Duke's first wife, and the Duke brought her to his Castle of Leicester. Ann. Dom. 1396.

But King Richard hated the Duke of Lancaster and his son, Henry, and there was strife between the Duke of Hereford and Thomas Duke of Norfolk. And each accused the other of treason against King Richard. 1398.

Then the King commanded that the cause should be tried by battle, and a day was appointed for the fight.

And the King came to Coventry, for there the battle was to be tried, and the Duke of Hereford appeared in arms against the Duke of Norfolk.

But when the lists were set, and the spears were in rest, and the battle would have been tried, the King threw down his warder and the fight was stayed.

And the King banished both Dukes from the realm,—the Duke of Hereford he banished for ten years, but the Duke of Norfolk for life.

Then the Duke of Norfolk went on pilgrimage and died at Venice.

But the Duke of Hereford went to the French King.

Ann. Dom. 1399.

And now John of Gaunt was sick and feeble, and he mourned for his son daily.

And in the springtime of the year he died at his palace in London, and by his desire he was buried by the side of his first wife, the Lady Blanche.

And the King came to the burying, and the Duke was buried like a mighty prince, but his son was far away, a banished man.

And the will of the Duke was made in the Castle of Leicester, the year before his death.

And he gave the best jewel that he should be possessed of at the time of his death to the King his nephew.

And two other jewels to his most dear wife Catherine.

And to his daughter Philippa Queen of Portugal, a cup of gold.

And to his daughter Catherine Queen of Castile, a cup of gold.

Also he gave to his son Henry a chain of gold, with the name of God on each part thereof, which his mother, Queen Philippa, had given him; and he desired that his son should keep the chain, with his blessing, and with the blessing of God.

And he gave to his son the Duke of Hereford many other costly gifts, for he had great possessions.

And he named the King his nephew supervisor of his will, and enjoined him to be faithful to his trust, as he would answer to Almighty God, "who is King over all kings, and will render to every man according to his deserts."

And he ordained that a Chantry be founded in the new Church of Our Lady at Leicester, for the soul of his late wife the Lady Constance, and for ever to keep an *Obit* for her soul on the 24th March in every year.

And so died John of Gaunt Duke of Lancaster, and Earl of Leicester.

And he was the last Earl of Leicester that dwelt in the Castle there.

And now Henry of Bolingbroke was Duke of Lancaster, and Earl of Leicester, but he was a banished man.

And for that he was away the King seized on all the possessions that by right belonged to him.

And all the gold and silver and rich hangings that were in the Castle of Leicester, did King Richard take for himself.

For the King despised the warning of John

of Gaunt, and feared not to commit this injustice.

Also he remembered the Castle of Leicester, and how it was full of great riches, for the King had seen them displayed, when he feasted there with the Duke of Lancaster.

And as the coming of King Edward to Leicester and the meeting of Hugo Despenser there was the ruin of King Edward, so the coming of King Richard to Leicester and the knowledge of the wealth therein, was the ruin of King Richard.

For the old saying was to be accomplished,—"Evil will follow the King of England, who feasts in the Castle of Leicester."

HENRY BOLINGBROKE.

Ann. Dom. 1399.

And in the month of May, King Richard sailed over the sea to Ireland.

But while he was away, the Duke of Hereford, who was now by his father's death Duke of Lancaster, and Earl of Leicester, returned to England in the King's despite.

For the sentence of banishment was yet in

force, but the Duke returned to England to claim his own. Ann. Dom. 1399.

And the people of England rejoiced greatly at his coming, and they helped him on every side, so that he entered London with sixty thousand men, who followed in his train, and he proclaimed himself Regent of the Kingdom during the King's absence.

Then King Richard returned in haste from Ireland, but he found no friends in the land, so he came to the Duke of Lancaster.

And when the Duke saw King Richard, he bent his knee and made obeisance as to the King.

But King Richard uncovered his own head, and said "*Fair cousin of Lancaster you are welcome.*"

And the Duke replied that he had come home before the time appointed, but he had come for the good of the people of the realm, and to help the King to rule them wisely.

And King Richard answered "*Fair cousin since it pleaseth you, it pleaseth me.*"

Then the trumpets sounded to horse, and the King became prisoner to the Duke.

And the King and the Duke came to Coventry, even to the place from whence but a year before the Duke was banished from the kingdom.

Ann. Dom. 1399.

And the King and the Duke came together to the city of London, but the people cursed King Richard, and reviled him to his face.

And they praised the Duke of Lancaster, for that he was the deliverer of the land, and he became King of England.

And King Richard died a bloody death, even as King Edward had died, and so the ancient saying was fulfilled.

And there were no more Earls of Leicester, and thenceforth to none of that name belonged the Castle of Leicester, or the town thereof, or any possessions therein, or any thing appertaining thereto, for they who were afterwards called Earls of Leicester were strangers to the town and county of Leicester, and of no account therein.

But, even as the glory of the sun is greatest at its setting, so did the grandeur of the last Earl of Leicester surpass that of all who had gone before him.

For the Earldom ceased, not by the failure of male issue, as in the days of Henry the Good Duke, or by attaint of treason as in the days of Simon, or by the hand of violence, as in the days of Thomas the Earl, but because the glory

of the Earldom was merged in the greater glory of the Crown.

How could he claim to be Earl of Leicester, who was King of all the land? How claim to be Seneschal of England, who was lord and master of the realm? How should he carry the sword of state before the King, who was himself the King of England, and bore on his head the diadem and in his hand the sceptre!

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